

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION  
FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
December 20, 2006, 4:30 p.m.  
Council Chambers**

**PRESENT**

Trena Carter  
Ian Kohen  
Greg Lewis  
Tony McClendon  
Akua Ofori-Boateng  
Gil Palmer  
John Roberts  
John Stroh

**ABSENT**

Jay Myers  
Jason Staley  
Wes Roy

**\*\*\* Meeting Called to Order \*\*\***

**VISITORS:** Chuck Boll, Deane Lahre, Chris Rutan, Carla Barrett, Sondra Bolte, Susan Points, Mark Scott, Brian Walters, Rhonda Fischer, Bruce Parker, Edward Fox, Joy Verbeke, Brian Wilder.

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Director Arlette Tinsley, Deputy Director Lorraine Smith and Secretary, Lula Young.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

Secretary Roberts called roll. **Commissioner Stroh moved to accept the September Minutes as submitted, Commissioner Kohen seconded. Motion carried.**

**Commissioner Stroh moved to accept the November Minutes as submitted, Commissioner Carter seconded. Motion carried.**

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Director Tinsley announced that Leadership Bartholomew County will be sponsoring a community conversation beginning with the first session on January 30<sup>th</sup> with additional sessions in February from 6 – 8:30pm at the Center for Teaching and Learning.

Topics will examine immigration from a legal, global and moral, ethical and religious perspective. Some of the prospective speakers may include the Sheriff's Department and an Indiana attorney. Participants will be able to submit questions anonymously.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:**

Commissioner Lewis reported the beginning balance, as of December 20 2006, as \$5,015.74. One expense of \$250.00, previously approved by Commissioners for the trip to the

Kidscommons museum for the Talks Mentoring program was noted. The current balance is \$4,765.74.

### **PUBLIC HEARING:**

Chairperson Palmer opened the hearing to hear public comments on the proposed amendment to Commission Rules and Regulations.

#### **Deane Lahre:**

“Good afternoon, my name is Deane Lahre. I am an I.U.P.U.C. adjunct instructor in statistics and I also teach at the Kelley School of Business in Bloomington. I am currently a resident of Bloomington but I do teach over here at I.U.P.U.C. I would just like to say that, as you probably well know, Bloomington and Indianapolis have already passed ordinances in favor of the gender identity and sexual orientation rights and I just simply would like to say that I would hope that you would pass this as well to join Bloomington and Indianapolis. And if there are any questions, I’d be glad but otherwise, I’m just here as an I.U.P.U.C. instructor to state that, you know, I live this way, I teach this way, uhm and you know, pretty much just your average professor. Thank you.”

#### **Chris Rutan:**

“As some of you know, my name is Chris Rutan. I spoke at the September meeting, I think it was, in support of a change of Rules & Regulations. Back in the early –late part of the summer I required the help of Brian (Wilder) from CPD to make sure that my safety was put as a top priority because I was threatened as a homosexual opening a church here in Columbus. And since then, my business has gone uh, I I’m an Avon representative, I work out of flea markets only. My business has decreased to where I’ve had to go out and get a job. I feel that if – I would strongly urge the Commission to please pass the Rules and Regulations change because – I was never out before. I’m now living an ‘out’ homosexual lifestyle. I don’t care who knows about me because that’s who I am. I have accepted myself and I think everybody else should too. And I just hope that when we pass this, as it’s been said before that, if I run into any trouble I can call the HRC or anybody involved to try to get help as to where I won’t feel discriminated against. I had no anticipation to go out and get another job not knowing that my business was going to go downhill for the wintertime because last year, I stayed afloat. But it’s always in the back of my mind what we’d do if I’m discriminated against; do I have anybody to fall back on? And as of right now, I don’t. So, I urge the Commissioners to please change their ordinance or anything that we can do; the Rules and Regulations to protect anybody, whether it is GLBT or whoever. Just so we do have protection. Thank you.”

Chairperson Palmer clarified with Mr. Rutan that the changes would be to the Rules and Regulations and not the Ordinance. Mr. Rutan acknowledged the clarification.

#### **Sondra Bolte:**

“I’m Sondra Bolte. I have gone through the gut-wrenching process of writing most of my personal story in letters to you already. But I just wanted to say that any time, uhm, Civil Rights of people who have been discriminated against have changed, it’s

been because of a few people with a lot of courage and I appreciate the courage that you all have shown in dealing with this issue.”

Chairperson Palmer asked for any additional comments before closing the public hearing and advised that after the open forum closed, no additional questions or comments could be accepted. **There being no additional comments or questions, the public hearing was closed by the chairperson at that time.**

#### **ACTION ITEM/VOTE ON PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO RULES & REGULATIONS:**

Chairperson Palmer entertained a motion:

**Commissioner Ian Kohen moved to vote on approving the [amendment] to the Rules and Regulations. Commissioner John Stroh seconded.**

Chairperson Palmer asked for comments or discussion: Commissioner McClendon asked how soon the change would take effect. Director Tinsley advised that as soon as the Amendment is signed by the Chairperson and Director, the changes would be in effect immediately and the Rules and Regulations would require this office to accept complaints the next business day. Commissioner McClendon inquired if a public notice would be made advising that the changes had been approved. Director Tinsley replied that the required legal public notice advising the community that the public hearing would take place had been advertised in The Republic and that a press release would be generated with the results.

Questioned by Commissioner Kohen, Director Tinsley responded that those community members that expressed concern when the Ad Hoc Committee began their research have been kept informed and also received information about when the public hearing was taking place.

Commissioner Roberts stated that as a Commissioner, a member of the Ad Hoc committee and an openly gay resident of this community, he thanks the Commission for taking this incremental step in keeping the dialogue going. He stated that, just because the Rules and Regulations have been changed doesn't mean dialogue can end; it must continue. He further stated that, the continued dialogue will augment those steps that the Commission can officially take.

Commissioner Lewis voiced his support of what the Commission is doing with the Amendment and thanked the Ad Hoc committee members for their work and echoed Commissioner Roberts on the importance of keeping open the line of communication and continuing the dialogue. Commissioner Lewis also commented about the attempts over the last couple of years of students at East High School that were interested in establishing a GSA and of their receiving a little administrative push-back. Opening the lines of communication and making it a part of the public record hopefully will help those who are interested in pursuing that line of work.

Director Tinsley provided additional information that after Commissioners amend the Rules and Regulations, the Commissioner's work on this issue from a policy-making standpoint, stops for a while. Staff begins the work of gathering data and documents, creating complaint forms, letters and training information, updating the website and brochure information. Director Tinsley advised she will be receiving technical assistance from Rob Ransom in Indianapolis and Barbara McKinney in Bloomington.

Commissioner Kohen shared thoughts about having been part of the sub-committee and his involvement with the G/SA, going through all of the inquiries and discussions; he feels very

strongly that the Commission is doing the right thing, taking the right step forward and asked that if anyone has any doubts to air them now.

Commissioner Stroh, on behalf of the Ad Hoc Committee, expressed appreciation to the people who were courageous enough to put into writing and share their personal experiences as it could not have been an easy process. Commissioner Stroh continued to advise that the letters were extremely helpful and helped to broaden his perspective on what was occurring here in Indiana.

Director Tinsley shared the independent effort made by the newest Commissioner, Trena Carter who read all of the letters submitted by the community and then met independently with the Director to review the issue at hand and the Rules and Regulations. Director Tinsley voiced her appreciation for Commissioner Carter's time commitment in researching this issue.

Commissioner Lewis voiced his gratitude and appreciation to the Ad Hoc Committee for the work done and to staff for laying the groundwork that has proven to be a less rocky, painful road than anticipated.

Chairperson Palmer commented that as much work that has gone into this process by both the Ad Hoc Committee and Commission at large, he acknowledged the visitors present and stated that it is because of their strength and courage that the Commission is currently entertaining a vote to change the Rules and Regulations. **Chairperson Palmer called for the vote on the motion on the table by Commissioner Kohen and seconded by Commissioner Stroh:**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

At this time the amendment changing the Rules and Regulations, as approved by the Commission, was signed by Chairperson Palmer. A photo of the chairperson and a photo of the full commission, staff, G/SA and supporting community members was taken by Personnel Director Chuck Boll to document the event.

Director Tinsley thanked Commissioners for their diligence in bringing the changes to the Rules and Regulations during her tenure.

Chairperson Palmer, Commissioner Roberts and Lewis voiced their appreciation to staff and committee. Commissioner Lewis affirmed that the action wasn't as daunting because it was the right thing to do.

Deputy Director Smith acknowledged the process followed by Director Tinsley and the historical significance of this amendment that is in alignment with the passing of the fair housing amendment in previous years.

Commissioner Roberts commented about the motto of Columbus, "Different by Design", and nowhere can you see a more representative view of the diverseness of this city as represented here on our Commission; that speaks well of the leadership of the board and within our city. Commissioner Roberts went on to say that as a member of the community that point was just validated. He went on to thank the Commission for choosing someone from the community like him to be a part of this Commission, as it represents to everybody that Columbus doesn't just say on the posters, "Different by Design," it is practiced.

Commissioner Kohen thanked the members of the Ad Hoc Committee for their hard work and members of the G/SA and others for sharing their experiences.

### **VOTE - 2007 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:**

Director Tinsley outlined the 2007 Goals and Objectives, highlighting the main changes to include changing all policies, documents and procedures with regard to the amendment change including offering the training to the Community.

Commissioner Kohen requested clarification on community liaisons appointed by the Commission such as the Transit Committee; he noted that the Interfaith Forum liaison was not listed.

Commissioner Lewis voiced a desire to observe the mediation process. Director Tinsley advised that a full mediation had not been required during recent complaint activity and that she will prepare mediation training for new commissioners.

Chairperson Palmer advised Commissioners and Staff of his current participation with a newly formed cabinet examining the diversity of I.U.P.U.C. Director Tinsley agreed that this can be included in the objectives for the Networking with the Community goal. The objective can be added as, 'support the work of the new IUPUC diversity cabinet as requested.'

**Commissioner Lewis moved to accept the 2007 Goals and Objectives with additions as noted. Commissioner Roberts seconded. Motion carried.**

### **VOTE - 2007 MEETING DATES:**

Chairperson Palmer reviewed meeting dates with Commissioners. After Commission discussion, Director Tinsley advised that the meeting dates would be sent by email as a calendar item and Outlook appointment for Commissioners.

**Commissioner Lewis moved to accept the proposed 2007 Full Commission Meeting dates. Commissioner McClendon seconded. Motion carried.**

### **ANNUAL DINNER:**

Commissioner Lewis inquired about the status of obtaining a speaker for the 2007 Annual Dinner. Director Tinsley asked Commissioners to vote on their top three speaker candidates for the dinner to allow contacts and scheduling to be completed. Discussion ensued with Commissioners surrounding speaker candidates.

Commissioner Roberts moved to table the selection of the top three annual dinner speaker choices to the January 31<sup>st</sup> meeting, Commissioner Stroh seconded. Motion carried.

### **LIAISON UPDATE – GAY/STRAIGHT ALLIANCE:**

Commissioner Kohen advised that as the G/SA has not met; no report.

### **LIAISON UPDATE – INTERFAITH FORUM:**

Commissioner Roberts reported that the Interfaith Forum had a great meeting that allowed members to reconnect with one another. The transcendent experience of participants was

mutually linked – as a result of that, they experienced the common thread that runs through all religions instead of being so separate.

**OPEN FORUM/CURRENT EVENTS & COMMUNITY CONCERNS:**

Commissioner Ofori-Boateng shared her experience of attending the National Civil Rights Museum 2006 Freedom Award in Memphis, TN. The honorees were Dr. Joseph Lowery, Bernard Kirchner and Stevie Wonder. One message that was consistent was that while a lot of work has been done, there has been a lot of regression. We all need to be retracing our steps and doing things that haven't been done before. Discussion ensued.

**ADJOURN:**

**Commissioner Lewis moved to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Carter seconded. Meeting adjourned.**